Synopsis

St. Louis Street Car Mail 1892-1915

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I began collecting MO Postal History in the early '90's and acquired a number of St. Louis Street Car cancels including one that turned out to be a last day cancel. Several years later, when the Earliest Known Usage (EKU) came up in a local auction, I was able to acquire it, giving me the bookends needed to tell the story of the Street Car Mail in St. Louis. I've been diligently trying to acquire key pieces ever since. I know of no other key item. I own all but 4 of the exact covers shown in the St Louis Monograph and those not owned are represented with as good or better items. Clayton Circuit key item is an example.

Purpose of Exhibit – The purpose of the exhibit is to show the routes, cancels and usages of the St. Louis Street Car mail service, the first in the U.S. St. Louis Postmaster John B. Harlow was the first postmaster in the U.S. to use electrified trolleys to speed up the mail service, using special cars similar to those in the RMS, in rapidly growing cities. Fourteen additional cities, using the St. Louis model, had their own distinguishing cancels using this method of mail delivery from 1892 to 1929 when the Baltimore system ended.

Challenge Factor – The St. Louis Monograph lists 55 different canceling devices, if you include the centennial cancel, used during the 23-year life of Street Car mail in St. Louis. Many are easy to acquire, but the last 10 to 12 become more difficult with the last 3 or 4 becoming extremely difficult to obtain. Earliest and latest known uses are subject to change. My EKU for the system is unique while the LKU can be found on more than one line. The many usages, destinations, special services, and unusual rates have been acquired over a period of 25 years. I recently acquired the rarest of all St. Louis cancels, the Clayton Circuit cancel, and can account for only two other cancels currently in collector's hands.

What is Presented – The exhibit shows examples of the St. Louis RPO No. 1, St. Louis and Florisant, Grand Avenue, St. Louis and Webster Groves, St. Louis and Kirkwood, St. Louis Provisional, Cass, Chouteau, Clayton, Olive, Easton, Northwest, North Broadway, Southwest, and South Broadway RPO's as well as the Centennial Parade RPO.

Organization – The organization is chronological as the lines came into existence and as additions and changes were made in the routes and old canceling devices were replaced by new ones. I also try to show some of the services, markings, and destinations for the different lines. Emphasis is placed on the Grand Avenue service which, during this period of time, was the major route along what was then the center of the upper-class residential area, was near major businesses, and carried a larger percentage of the mail than most lines. The six St. Louis Sub-Stations (A, B, C, D, E, and F) were closed during this period causing more mail to be sorted and canceled by clerks on the mail cars. The Post Card craze was growing rapidly. Many posted and delivered the same day. Example: "I hope to see you at the party tonight." on one card.

Material Highlights – Rare Clayton cancel with no more than three recorded examples. [F_3P_3] [Frame 3, Page 3]
EKU (Unique) [F_1P_4] and LKU's [F_5P_{16}] for St. Louis with EKU's and LKU's for several circuits and devices.
Foreign Destinations: France [F_1P_5, F_2P_9], Germany [F_1P_{14}, F_2P_8, F_5P_3], Cuba [F_1P_{15}], Italy [F_2P_3], Switzerland, [F_2P_9] South Africa [F_3P_{10}]
Incoming: Norway [F_4P_6], Mexico [F_4P_{12}], Germany [F_5P_3]
Misspelled Cho*u*teau on a special delivery cover [F_3P_9]
Several unlisted (TR) in numbers and Killer numbers
Six Special Delivery uses including two routes not listed in Doug Clark's original survey
Japanese Newspaper wrapper with a transit marking [F_5P_4] Unlisted
All 3 of the markings, each used less than a month, with no reference to "St. Louis" in the cancel [F_4P_{15}, F_5P_8, F_5P_{12}]
All of the Provisional cancels with variations [F_2P_{14} – F_3P_2] Double Provisional same cover, 2 consecutive days.[F_2P_{15}]
A double street car cancel [F_1P_{12}] and a combination street car cancel with a St. Louis Pioneer Air Mail cancel [F_3P_{16}] Both unlisted.

Bibliography –
The Street Railway Post Offices of Saint Louis by Robert G. Schultz, 1984, MPOS Monograph Series
"The Saint Louis, Missouri Street Car Mail System" by Robert J. Hutcheson, 1963 Congress Book
"The Street Car R.P.O. System by Earl D. Moore, 1948 Stamp Specialist, Chartruse Book

Latest Revision Format –
Each new Chapter **heading** is printed in **Bold Black.** Subsequent pages within the chapter printed in **Light Gray.** The same format for the Sub-Sections. **Paper color has gone from Ivory to Cream. Maps on Ivory background with gray mat. Tightened up some wording, eliminated some white space by adding 4 – 5 more covers. Over 60 auxiliary markings shown.** Almost every item has a **Red Bullet** so you, as a judge, can tell what you are looking at without reading the details under the item unless you want more information. **Enjoy.** 2/05/15